

# Mount Vernon Avenue Area Plan

City of Alexandria

March 24, 2004

**EDAW**

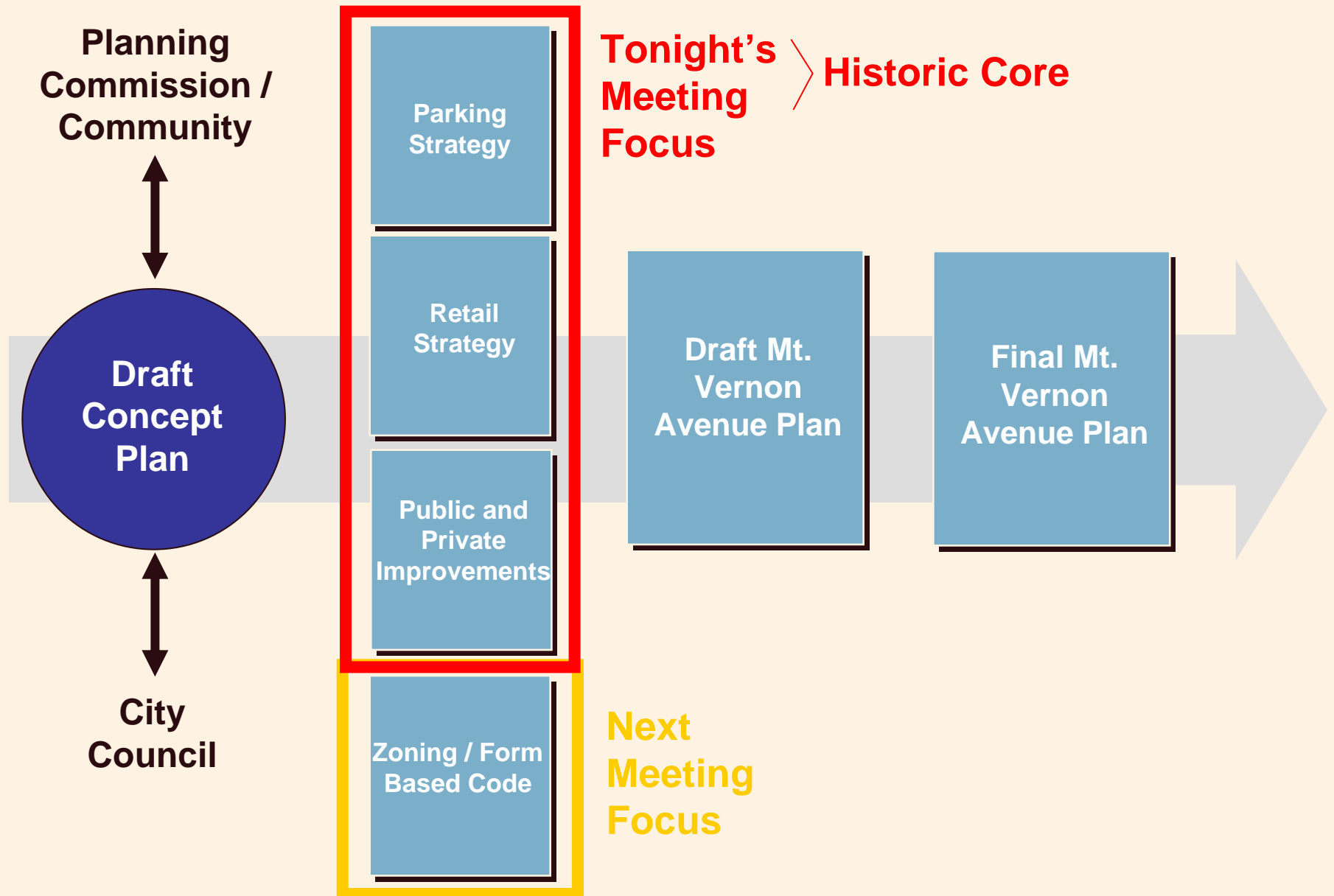
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# Process

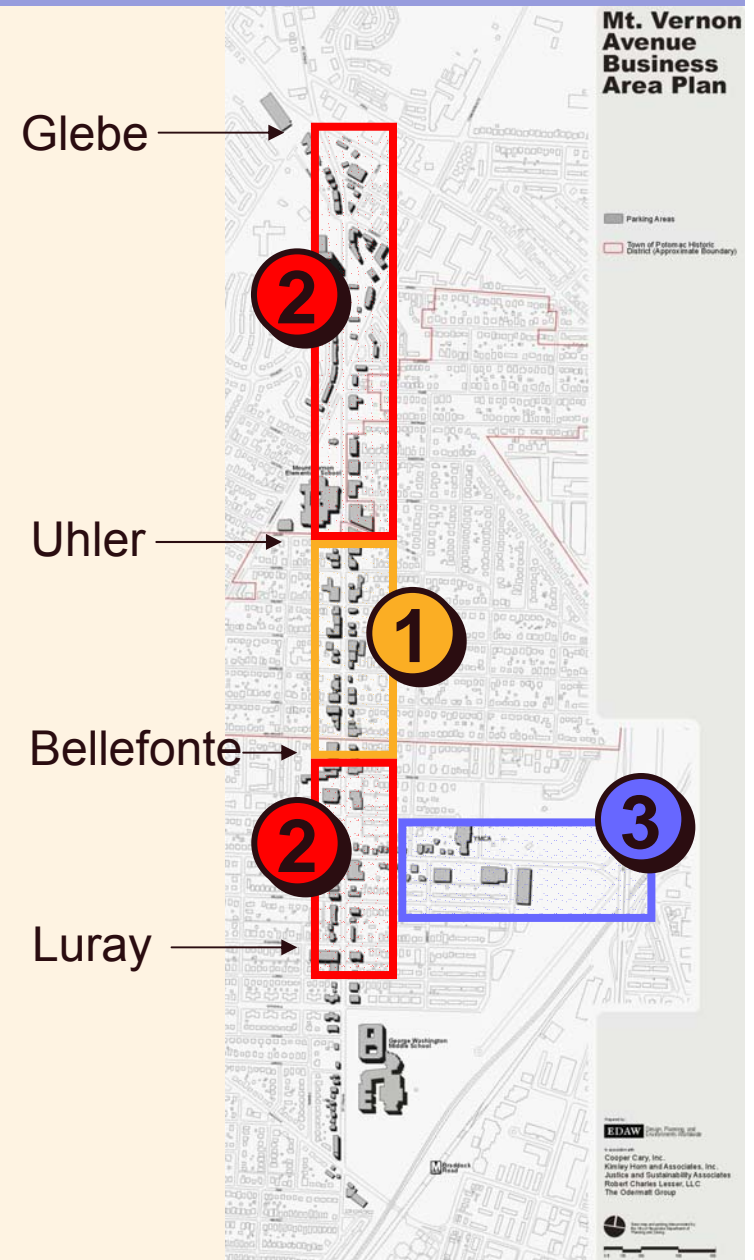




## The Draft Plan

# Draft Plan Focus Areas

- 1** Protect and Enhance the Historic Retail Core (Uhler to Bellefonte)
- 2** Capitalize on Infill Development and Extend Streetscape Improvements South to Luray
- 3** Plan the Long-term Improvements to the Monroe Gateway (link with Potomac Yard and Rt. 1 Bridge Improvements)

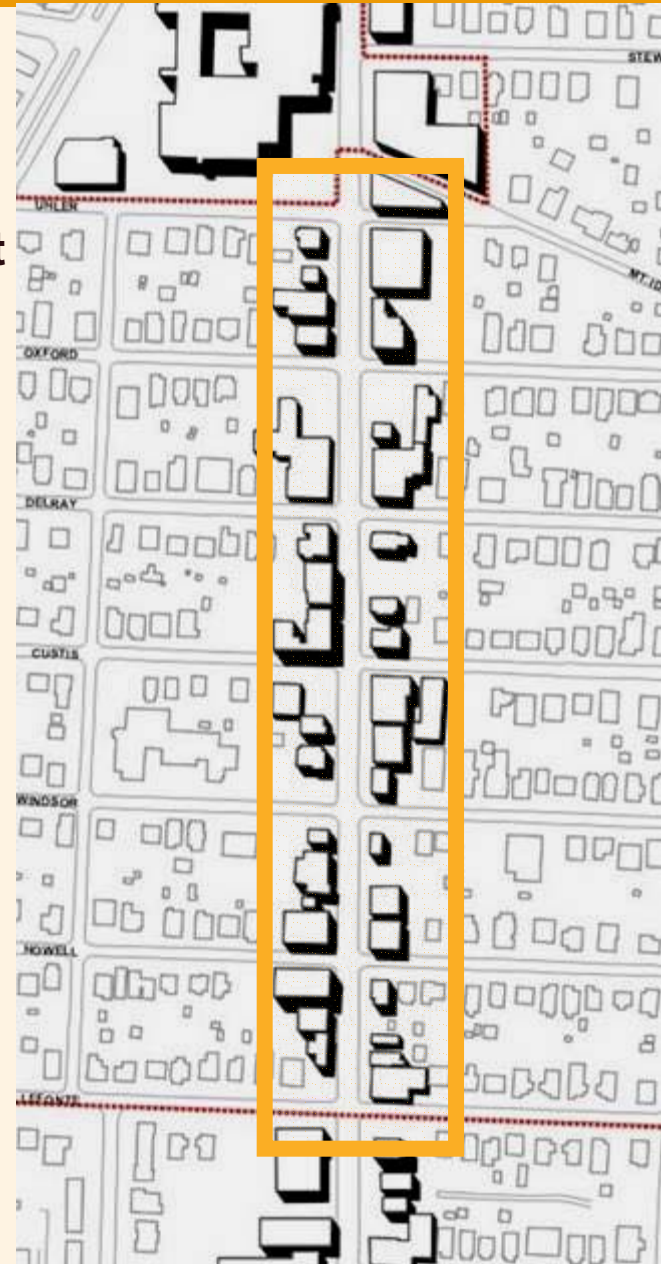




## Focus Area 1: Protect and Enhance Historic Retail Core

# 1. Protect and Enhance Historic Retail Core

- ▶ **Emphasize retail on the 1<sup>st</sup> Floor**
  - » Limit office & residential on ground floor
  - » Limit frontage of personal services and financial uses (maximum of 30' of storefront length)
  - » Establish a local team approach to market Avenue to desired retail businesses
- ▶ **Facilitate compatible infill development**
  - » Permit modest increase in development
  - » Ensure protection of adjacent residential
  - » Encourage residential on upper floors
- ▶ **Facilitate streetscape improvements and façade enhancements**
- ▶ **Implement a coordinated parking strategy**





# 1. Protect and Enhance Historic Retail Core

- ▶ **Permit modest increase in development with performance goals**
  - » **Retain existing historic buildings**
  - » **Maintain historic character and scale**
  - » **Provide open space or contribute an in-kind payment for neighborhood open space improvements**
  - » **Protect residential neighborhood**
  - » **Allow parking to be accommodated on site or through participation in a coordinated parking strategy**
- ▶ **Encourage minimum of 2 stories to create a Main Street scale**





# **The Planning Issues**

**A. Infill Development**

**B. Parking**

**C. Retail Strategy**

**D. Public and Private  
Improvements**



# A. Infill Development

## What do we want to achieve?

- » Allow modest increases in development with new uses to support the neighborhood
- » Maintain the historic buildings and district character
- » Enhance the Avenue's scale and "Main Street" character
- » Minimize the impact on the residential neighborhood



## A. Infill Development

### How do we achieve the objective?

- ▶ Allow modest increases over what is allowed under the current zoning when certain performance standards are met
- ▶ Performance standards include assuring that:
  - » Existing historic buildings are retained
  - » Proposed land uses are appropriate to the neighborhood
  - » Historic character and scale of the Avenue is maintained
  - » Impacts on residential neighborhood are mitigated
  - » Parking meets the requirements of the Plan



# A. Infill Development

## Performance Standards

- ▶ **Existing historic buildings are retained**
  - » Update National Register listing of historic buildings
  - » Encourage use of tax credits for rehabilitation and improvements
  
- ▶ **Proposed land uses are appropriate to the neighborhood**
  - » Ground floor uses facing the street must be occupied by retail uses
  - » Office uses must be located at the rear of the buildings on the ground floor or located on upper floors
  - » New personal services uses (i.e. dry cleaners and hair salons) limited to a storefront width of more than 30 feet
  - » Residential use not allowed on the ground level within the core area, but encouraged on floors above the ground floor



# A. Infill Development

## Performance Standards

- **Historic character and scale of the Avenue is maintained**
  - » **Current FAR criteria do not provide adequate guidance to the private sector or the City**
  - » **Use “form based” code rather than FAR to define the scale and character of new construction**



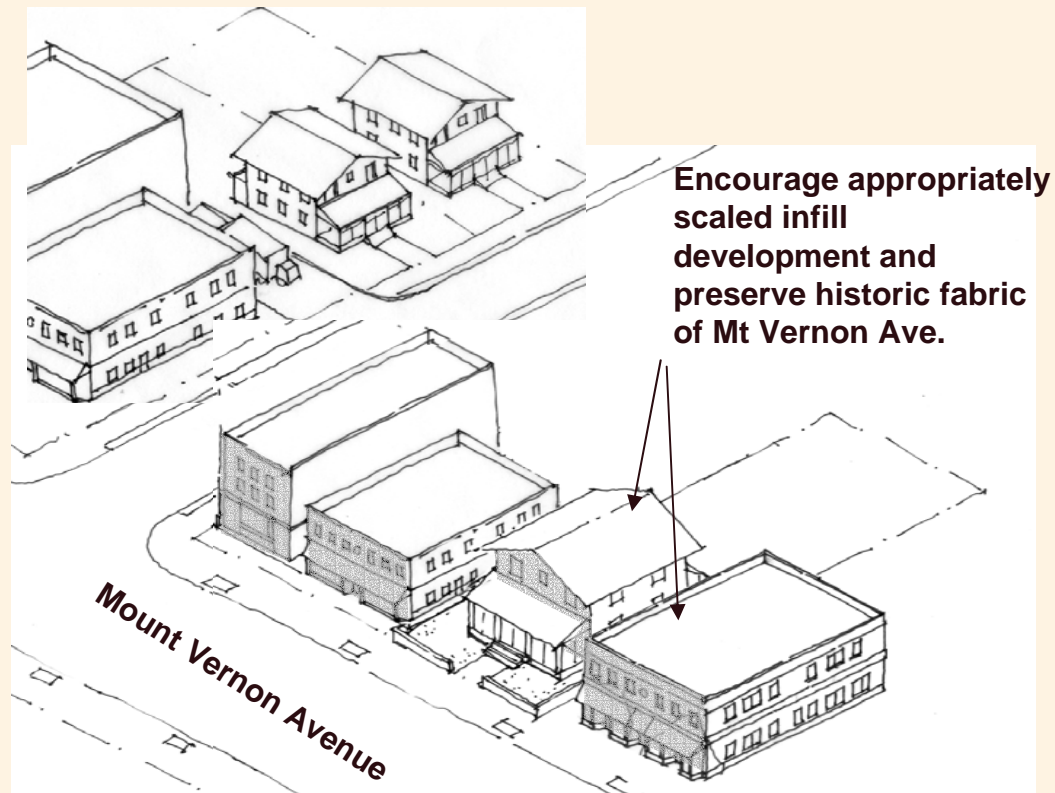
**While appearing to be in context with the street, all of these buildings exceed the allowable .75 FAR**



# A. Infill Development

## Performance Standards

- **Historic character and scale of the Avenue is maintained**
  - » Use a form based regulatory approach which describes the characteristics of the desired “streetwall” and the “envelope” of the building

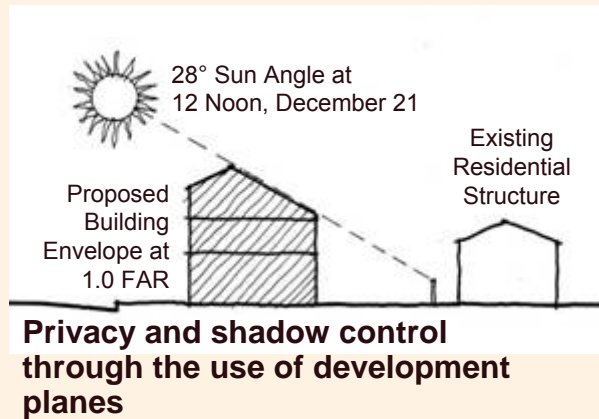




# A. Infill Development

## Performance Standards

### ► Impacts on residential are mitigated



**Visual buffering with walls, fences and landscaping**



**Screen parking garages or other service uses**



**Buffer Parking Areas**

**Free-standing Fence with Vines**



**Screen Unsightly Objects**

# A. Infill Development

## Performance Standards

- ▶ **Parking meets the requirements of the Plan**
  - » **New development must provide parking as determined in the Plan.**  
**The parking requirements influenced by:**
    - › **A walking neighborhood**
    - › **Transit availability**
    - › **Results of a “parking utilization” analysis to determine the utilization of the existing parking**
    - › **Potential for jointly sharing existing private parking**



## B. Access and Parking

**Use a Multi-modal strategy to support and enhance the pedestrian-oriented nature of the Avenue and the neighborhood to include:**

- ▶ **Transit**
- ▶ **Walking/Bicycling**
- ▶ **Parking**

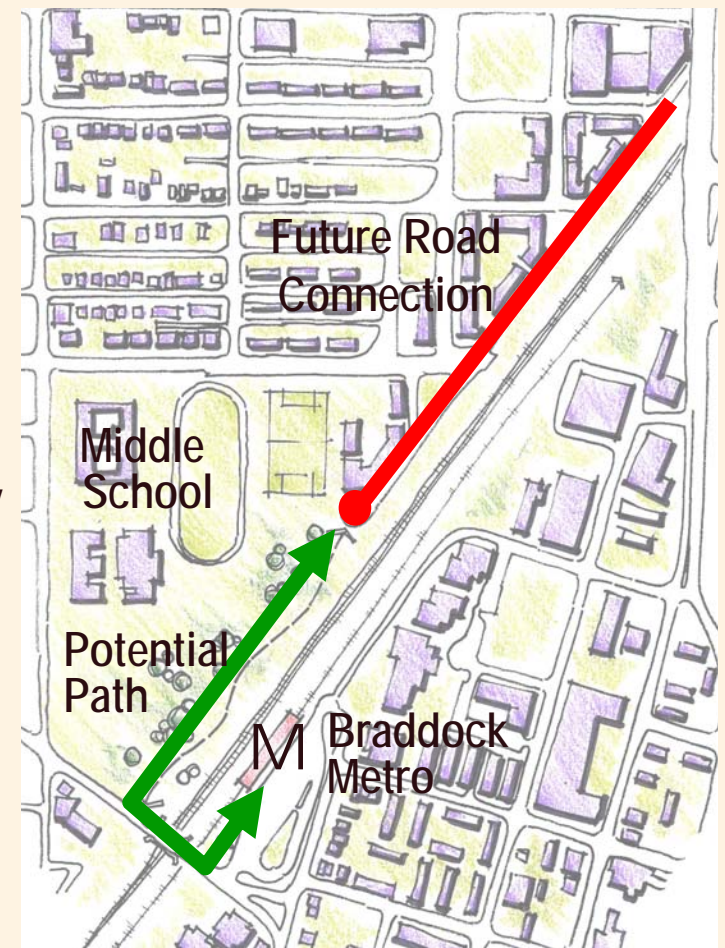




## B. Access and Parking

### Encourage greater use and availability of transit by:

- ▶ Enhancing existing bus stops with benches, shelters, and schedules
- ▶ Promoting transit as a way to get to the Avenue
- ▶ Providing DASH service along Avenue
  - » Contingent on construction of bus maintenance facility and purchase of new buses (anticipated completion 2008)
  - » Provide new cross-town routes to connect Avenue with other neighborhoods
  - » Provide loop service to Potomac Yard
- ▶ Providing better pedestrian connections to the Braddock Road Metro Station
  - » Work with the School Board to formalize a safe, accessible path for pedestrians and students



## B. Access and Parking

### Walking/Bicycling

- ▶ Encourage walking and bicycling by providing streetscape and lighting improvements
  - » Improve pedestrian crossings
  - » Provide bicycle racks
- ▶ Consider elimination of the four-lane roadway width on the Avenue north of Commonwealth Avenue and provide a two lane roadway with on-street parking north to Glebe Road
- ▶ Ensure that infill and new development prioritize the pedestrian over the automobile as recommended by the Plan

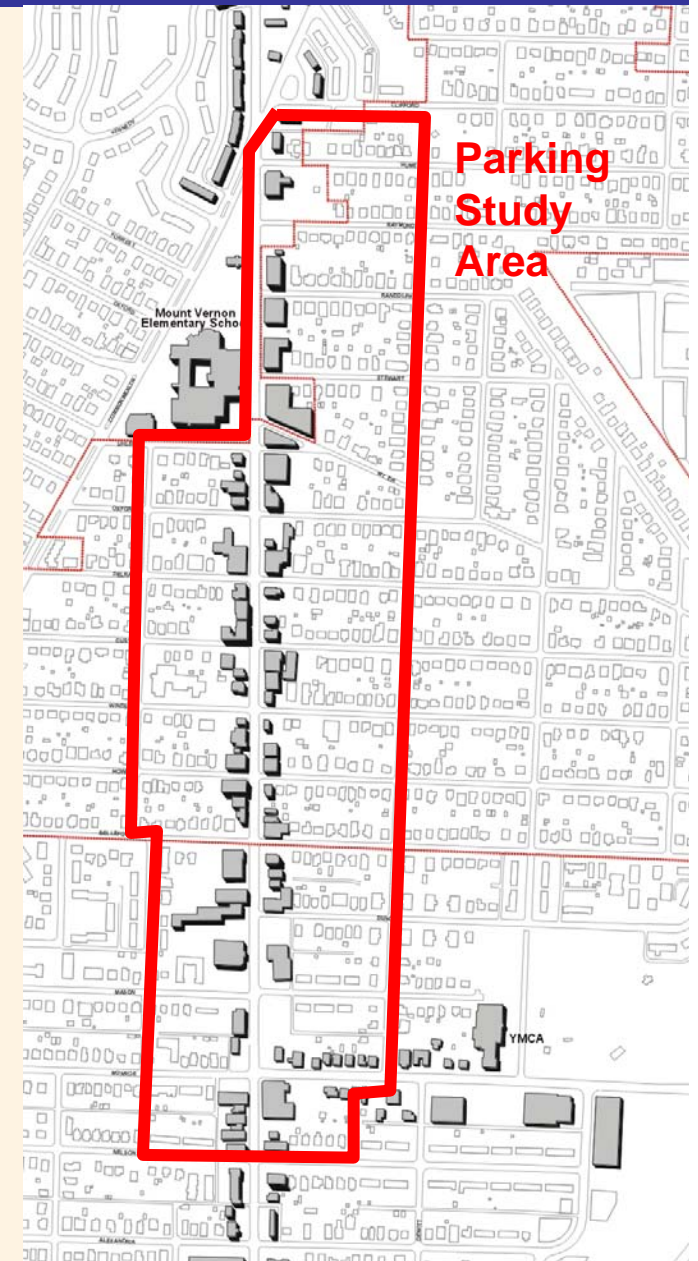




## B. Access and Parking

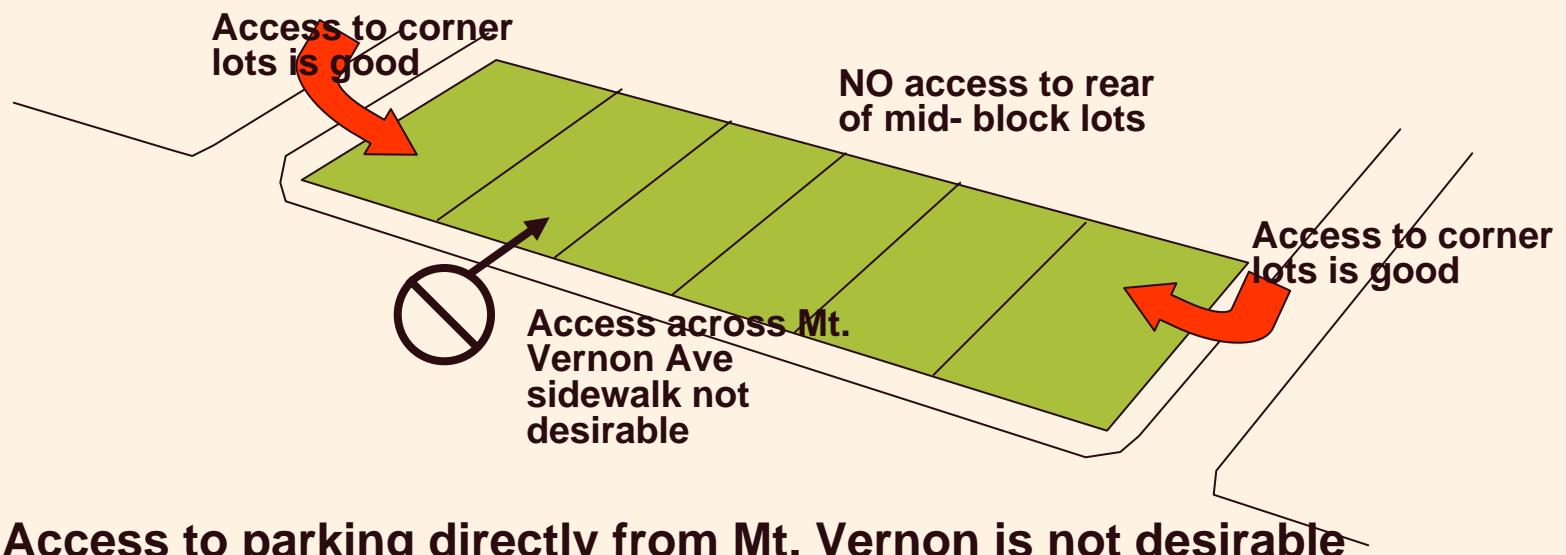
### Parking

- ▶ **Current Parking Utilization and Demand**
  - » 459 total spaces (on Avenue, select private lots, residential streets within one block of Avenue)
    - › 82 spaces on Avenue and 197 on selected lots (279 total)
  - » 40-70% parking in historic core occupied
  - » 140-262 unused spaces in core depending on day/time
    - › 40-70% unused spaces located in private lots
- ▶ **Future Parking Utilization and Increases in Density (FAR) at .75, 1.0**
  - » Increase development to achieve .75 FAR results in need for 372 spaces
  - » Increase development to achieve 1.0 FAR results in need for 687 spaces
  - » These figures exceed number of unused spaces; new parking is needed to meet demand generated by increases in density



## B. Access and Parking

- **New Parking on the Avenue is Difficult to Achieve**
  - » **Parcels are small, shallow and not efficient for parking**



- » **Access to parking directly from Mt. Vernon is not desirable**
- » **Large redevelopment parcels (composed of traditional small lots) not desired, because this type of development will change the character and scale of the neighborhood**

## B. Access and Parking

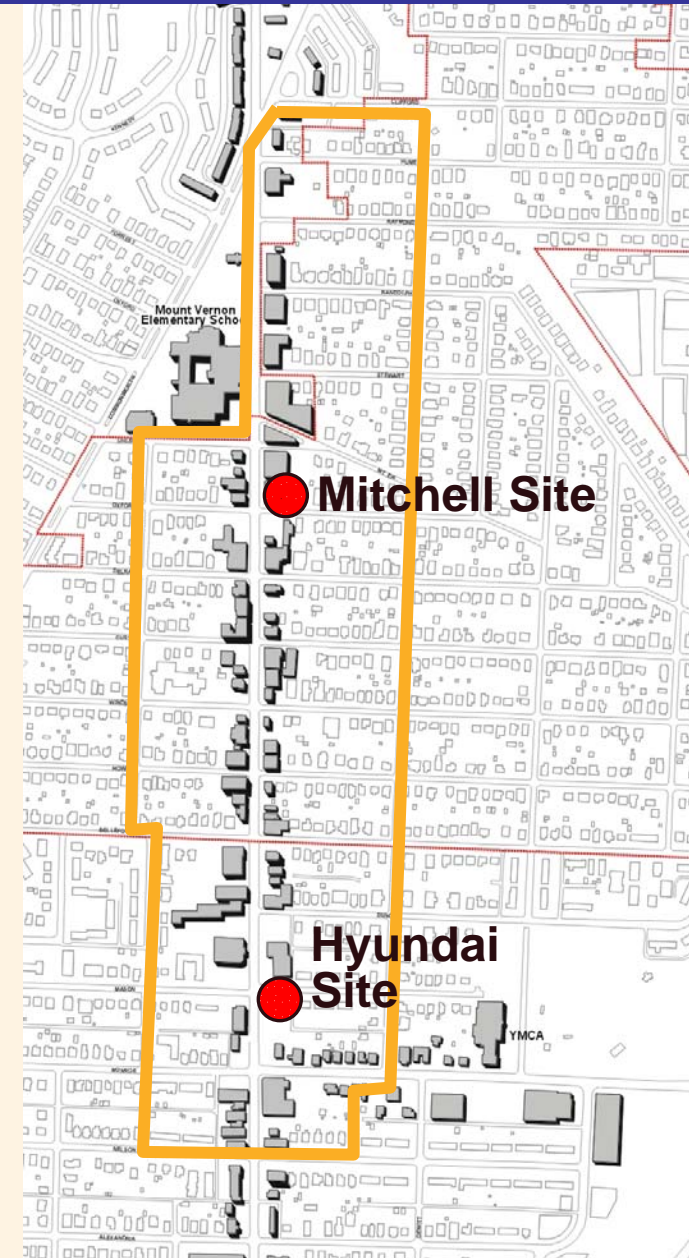
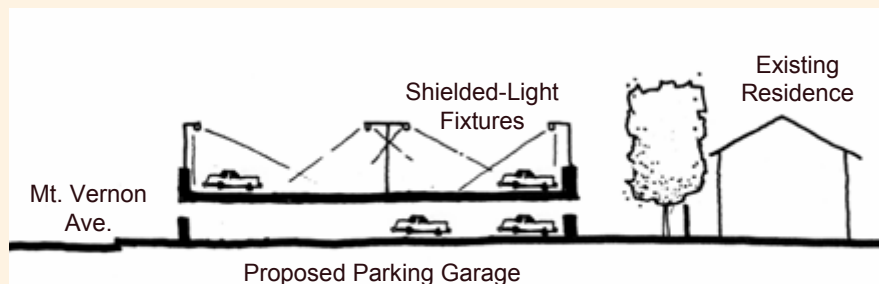
- ▶ **Recognizing that new on-site parking is difficult to achieve, the following strategies were considered to address current and future parking demand:**
  - » **New structured parking**
  - » **New surface parking lots**
  - » **Shared parking program**
  - » **Parking overlay district to ease requirements**
  - » **Greater enforcement of existing parking limitations**
  - » **Rear yard access or rights of way from alleys**

## B. Access and Parking

### Structured Parking

**Evaluated Pros/Cons of New Parking Structures on Existing Parcels: Cons Outweigh Pros**

- ▶ **Mitchell Site / Hyundai Site**
  - » Requires cooperation of property owners or acquisition by public entity
  - » Expensive structure that has visual and environmental impacts on adjacent residences
  - » Above grade structures will change the character of the neighborhood and the Avenue
  - » Expensive to construct
    - › 160 cars/lot @\$18,000 +/- space



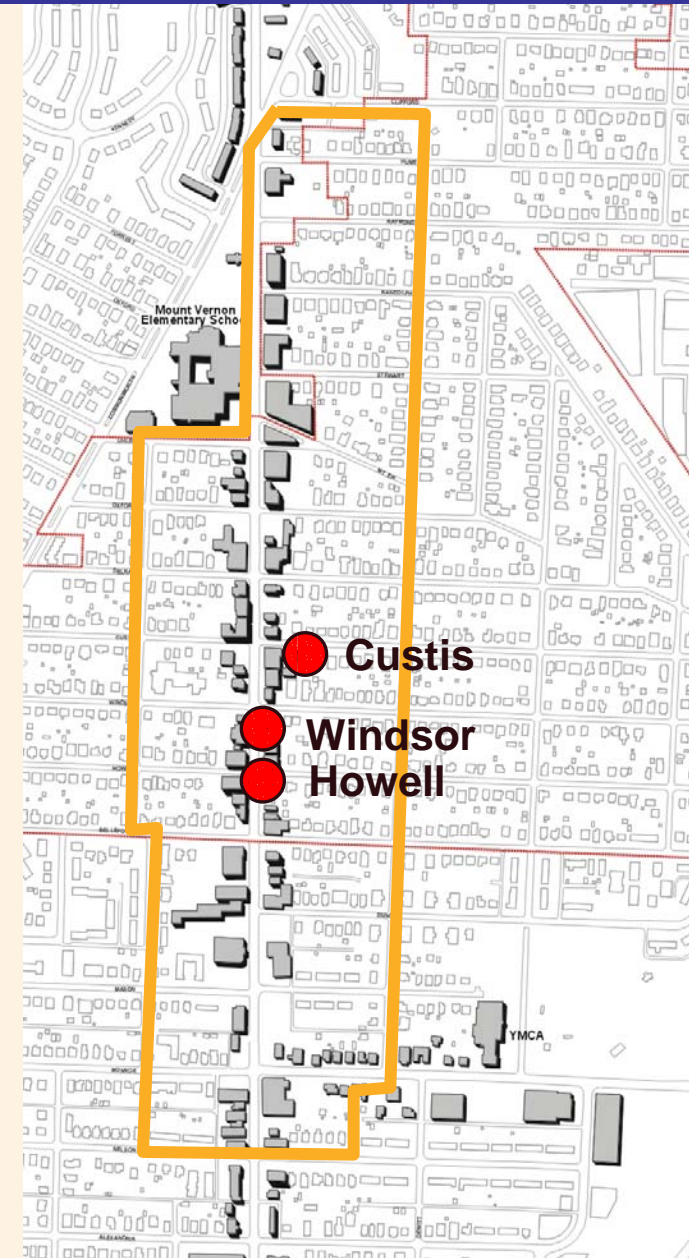


## B. Access and Parking

### Surface Parking Lots

#### Evaluated Pros/Cons of Surface Parking: Cons Outweigh Pros

- ▶ **Mt. Vernon and Windsor or Howell**
  - » Requires acquisition and demolition/relocation of historic structures
  - » Creates prominent parking on the Avenue
  - » Creates discontinuity in retail frontage
  - » Impacts residential uses
  - » Expensive to acquire and construct
    - › 20 cars/lot @ \$25,000 +/- space
- ▶ **200 block E. Custis**
  - » Requires acquisition and demolition of existing building occupied by a church
  - » Impacts residential uses
  - » Expensive to acquire, demolish, construct
    - › 40 cars/lot @\$17,000 +/- space

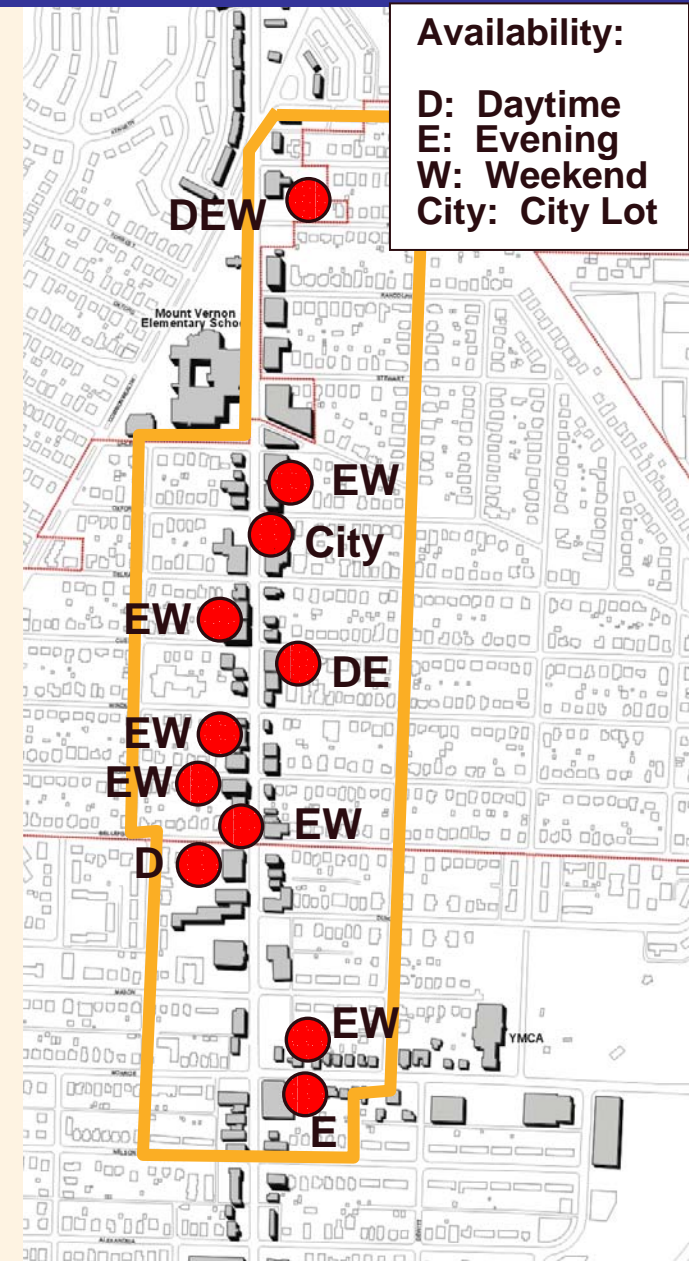




## B. Access and Parking

### Shared Parking Program

- ▶ Goal: Better utilize existing private parking resources
- ▶ Identified 10 underutilized parking lots
- ▶ Use lots for employee parking to allow customers to park on Avenue and afford greater turnover of spaces for customers
- ▶ Implementation Issues: compensation, liability, maintenance, lighting, education, signage
- ▶ Organization to address issues, monitor parking, promote shared parking program

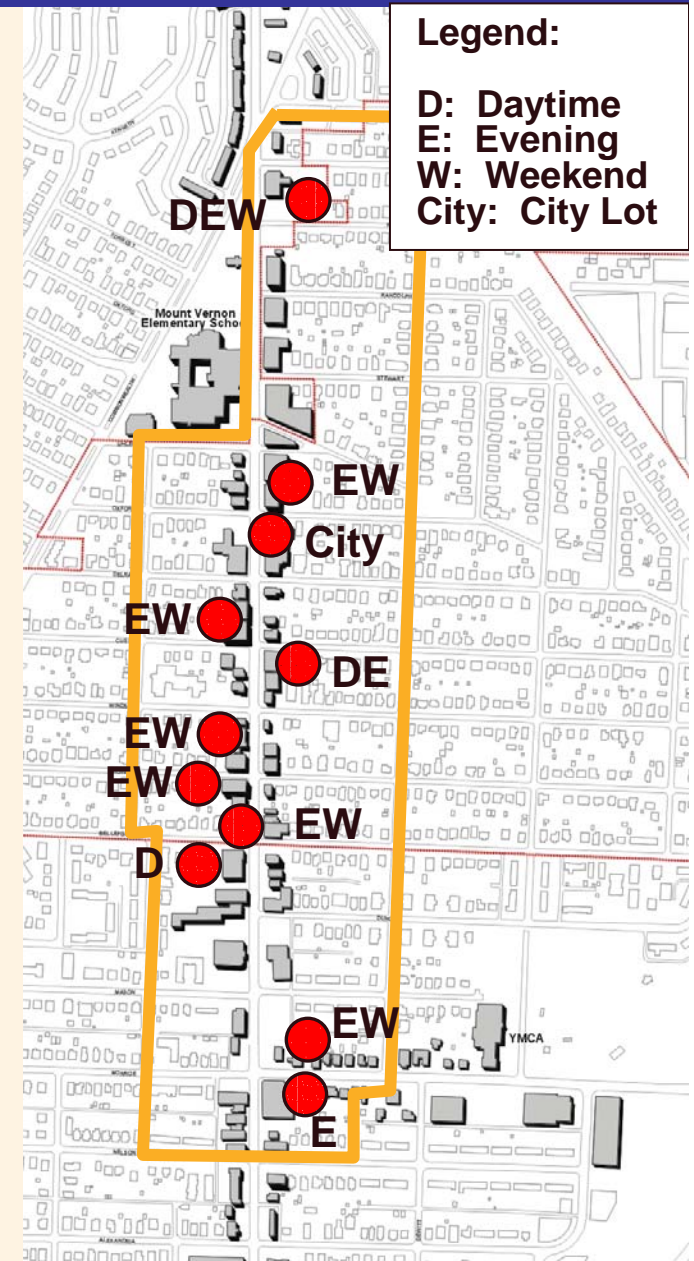


## B. Access and Parking

### Parking Recommendations

- ▶ Create a Shared Parking Program
- ▶ Create a Parking Overlay District for the Core Area with parking reductions
  - » Waive the increase in parking requirements for change in use from office and personal service to retail
  - » Waive parking for outdoor seating at restaurants/cafes
  - » Reduce on-site requirement by 50% for compatible infill development and additions
  - » No reduction for tear downs of existing buildings

**Reducing the parking requirement has the potential to increase the impact on the adjacent residential neighborhood.**



## **B. Access and Parking**

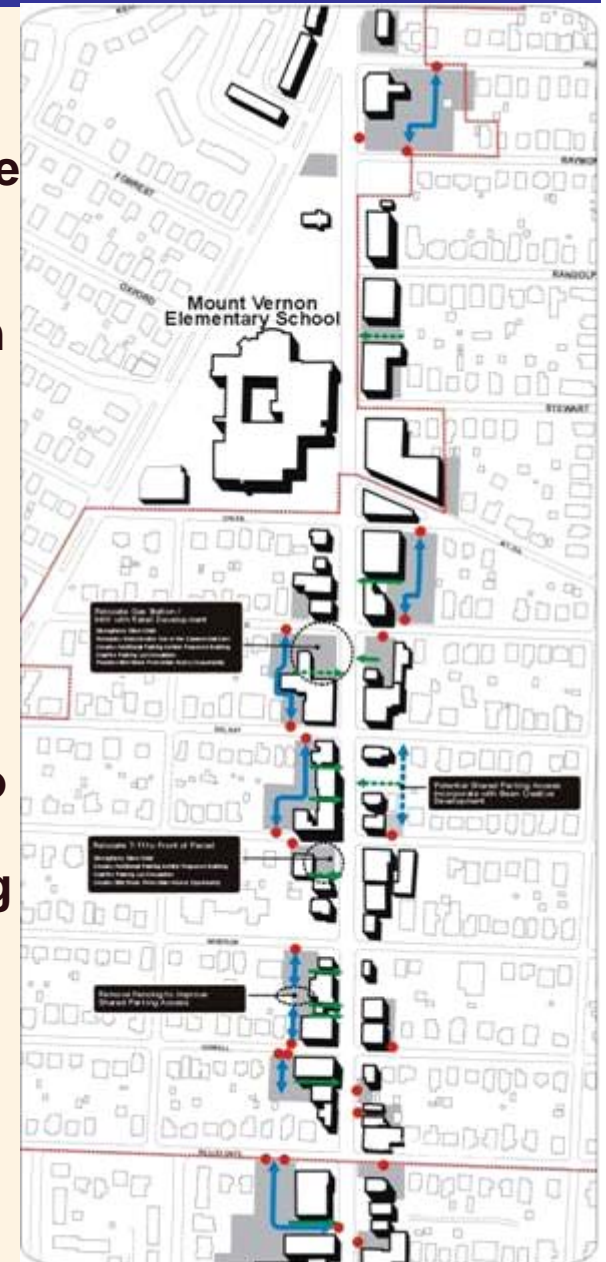
### **Parking Recommendations Continued**

- ▶ **Monitor parking utilization and determine when additional parking strategies are necessary to meet increased demand**
- ▶ **Develop thresholds for utilization that trigger more proactive response to parking demand:**
  - » **Install meters along Avenue and residential permit parking in neighborhood**
  - » **Establish public / private partnership to develop new parking**

## B. Access and Parking

### Other Parking Tweaks

- ▶ **Create Rear Yard Access or Rights of Way from the Alleys**
  - » Encourage improvements to rear yards/buildings through improvement program
  - » Work with property owners to obtain easements
  - » Provide signage to direct drivers to parking
- ▶ **Greater Enforcement of Existing 2 Hour Parking Limitation**
- ▶ **Identify possible locations for existing taxi cab stand**
- ▶ **Resolve conflicts in parking limitations adjacent to Mt. Vernon Elementary School**
- ▶ **Identify locations for possible shorter term parking spaces on the Avenue (such as a 20 min space) where needed to facilitate increased turnover for specific businesses**



## C. Retail Strategy

### **Mission Statement drafted by the Retail Subcommittee:**

***Mount Vernon Avenue is a vibrant and welcoming Main Street that reflects the surrounding neighborhoods' diversity, integrity and small-town charm. The Avenue is comprised of enthusiastic, successful and responsible community partners. We offer an eclectic and friendly living, working and shopping environment for Alexandrians and visitors alike.***

***There is still a Main Street.... It's called the Avenue***



## C. Retail Strategy

### Retail Market Study

- ▶ Study shows projected demand for approx. 10% additional “Main Street” retail/restaurant space by 2010
  - » Study looks at unique and eclectic stores not competing with larger chain stores
  - » Strongest demand is for restaurants
  - » Also demand for Convenience Goods and Home Furnishings stores.
- ▶ Retail subcommittee recommends to target:
  - » Restaurants: including diner, family-style restaurant, and restaurant w/ entertainment and/or arts component
  - » Specialty foods: Gourmet foods, meat/fish market, confectionaries
  - » Home furnishings: Stores offering unique products not available elsewhere
  - » Antiques/art galleries
  - » Art supplies

## C. Retail Strategy

### Marketing Strategy

- ▶ Marketing efforts need permanent staffing and funding to ensure an ongoing effort
- ▶ Advertising: Maintain recent PWBA efforts, i.e. advertising through the following mediums:
  - » Radio station commercials
  - » In regional publications – newspapers/magazines
  - » On Metrobuses, etc.
- ▶ Festivals/Events: Tie retail marketing into events such as
  - » Art on the Avenue
  - » First Night Alexandria
- ▶ Unified Store Hours: Work to promote more unified store hours among retailers
- ▶ Avenue Identity: Create a program to install community banners, heritage signage and gateways to give a greater sense of identity

# C. Retail Strategy

## Retail Design Strategy

Good design can increase consumer interest and create a more unique community identity. Recommendations include:

- ▶ Outdoor Restaurant Seating: Support the creation of outdoor seating at restaurants to create a more vibrant street atmosphere
- ▶ Building Design Guidelines:
  - » Preferred width of a storefront is 20 to 30', and should be a maximum of 50'
  - » Minimum depth of a retail store to be 50', or the depth of the building if less than 50'



## C. Retail Strategy

### Retail Design Strategy (continued)

- ▶ Facade and Landscaping Improvements:
  - » Encourage continued facade improvements such as signage, painting, and architectural enhancements
  - » Encourage a greater level of landscaping between storefronts and sidewalks
  - » Encourage store window lighting to improve after dark image





# C. Retail Strategy

## Arts Strategy

- ▶ **Emphasize promoting the Arts throughout Mt. Vernon Avenue:**
  - » **Partner w/ local arts groups (i.e., Del Ray Artisans, Art League, etc.) to promote arts**
  - » **Establishing art studios, either in single building, or dispersed along the Avenue**
  - » **Public art**
  - » **More festivals and arts promotions**
  - » **Art supply store**



## C. Retail Strategy

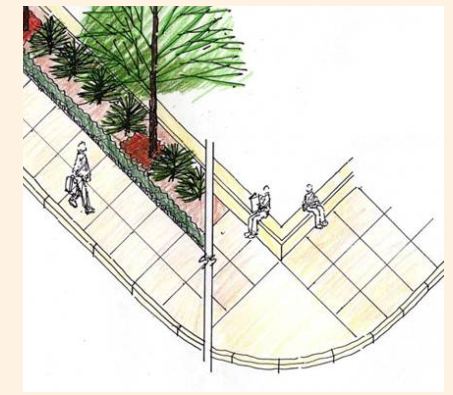
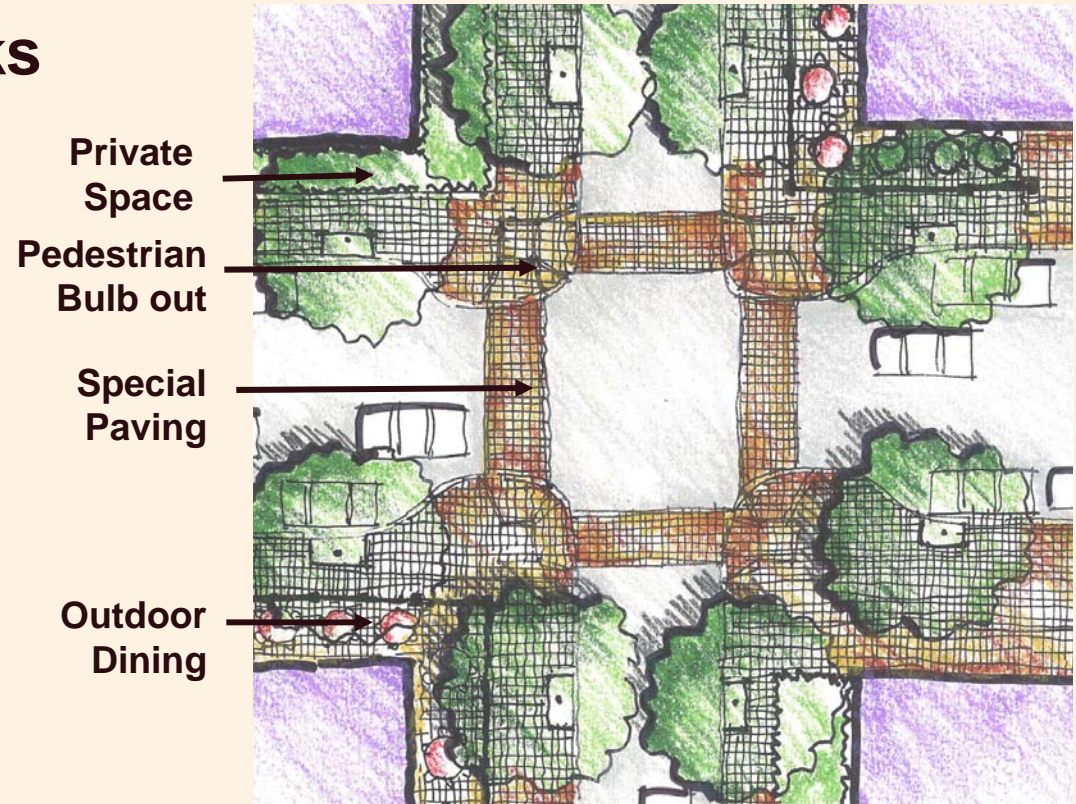
### Implementation

- ▶ **“Mt. Vernon Manager” Position:** Create a permanent position to build upon PWBA’s current marketing activities. Duties of this position include:
  - » Working closely with City, AEDP, and PWBA to attract targeted types of retail to Mt. Vernon Avenue
  - » Managing marketing and promotion efforts
  - » Acting as a liaison between AEDP and business owners by coordinating programs (i.e., Facade Improvement Program) along the Avenue
  - » Working with Alexandria SBDC to assist in creating business plans and merchandizing strategies for individual businesses
  - » Coordinating among retailers to establish more unified store hours and other common operating standards
- ▶ **Business Improvement District:** Explore using a Business Improvement District as a way to fund marketing programs and activities, including the Mt. Vernon Manager position.

## D. Public and Private Improvements

### Sidewalk and Crosswalks

- ▶ **Improve 10' private areas**
  - » Continue paving to building face in commercial areas
  - » Provide minimum of 7-8' sidewalk along Mt Vernon Avenue (allow reductions to 5' in limited sections to accommodate outdoor dining)
- ▶ **Improve Intersections**
  - » Implement bulb outs at intersections in historic core and provide special paving in crosswalks
- ▶ **Extending the sidewalk paving to the south with the undergrounding of the utilities**



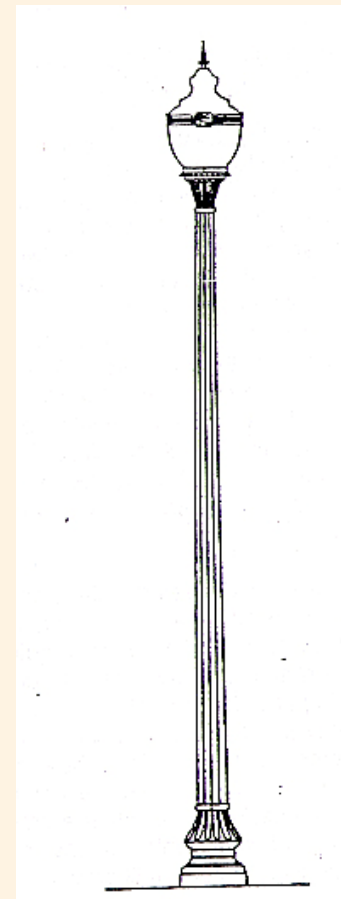
## D. Public and Private Improvements

### The Lighting Enhancement

- Implement pedestrian lighting improvements between Commonwealth and Braddock



Laminal Options



Option A



Option B



## D. Public and Private Improvements

### The Street Furniture Enhancement

- Implement standardized benches and trash receptacles



Existing Bench –  
Option A



Aluminum Trash  
Receptacle



Specialty Bike Rack



Bench Option B

## D. Public and Private Improvements

### The Street Graphics Enhancement

- ▶ Include as part of the citywide heritage / signage program
- ▶ Key locations for signage at entrance to historic district (on Mt. Vernon Avenue)
- ▶ Street signs should be replaced with uniform City signs – focus on new signage and banners for identity



Gateway/Heritage Signage



Banners and Signage

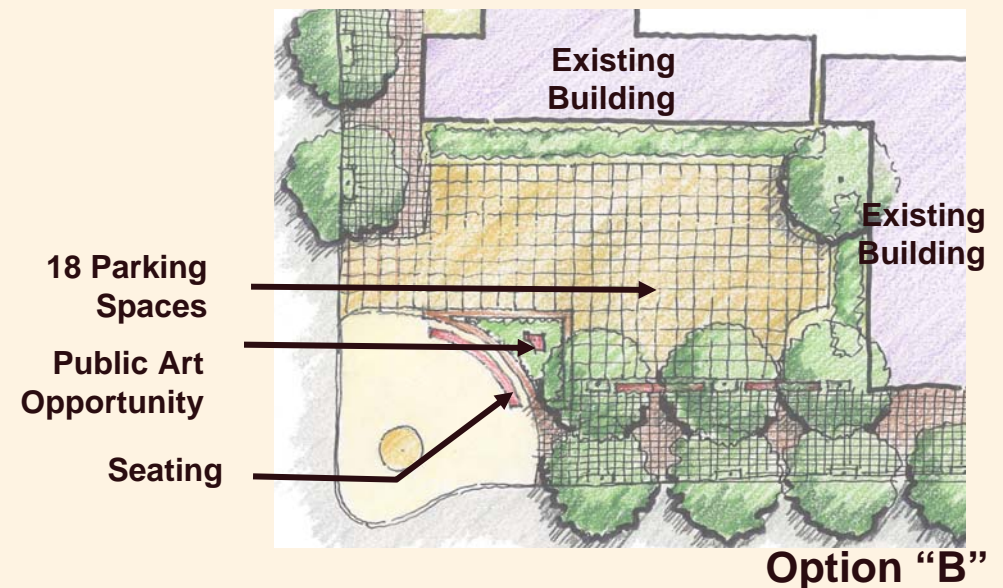
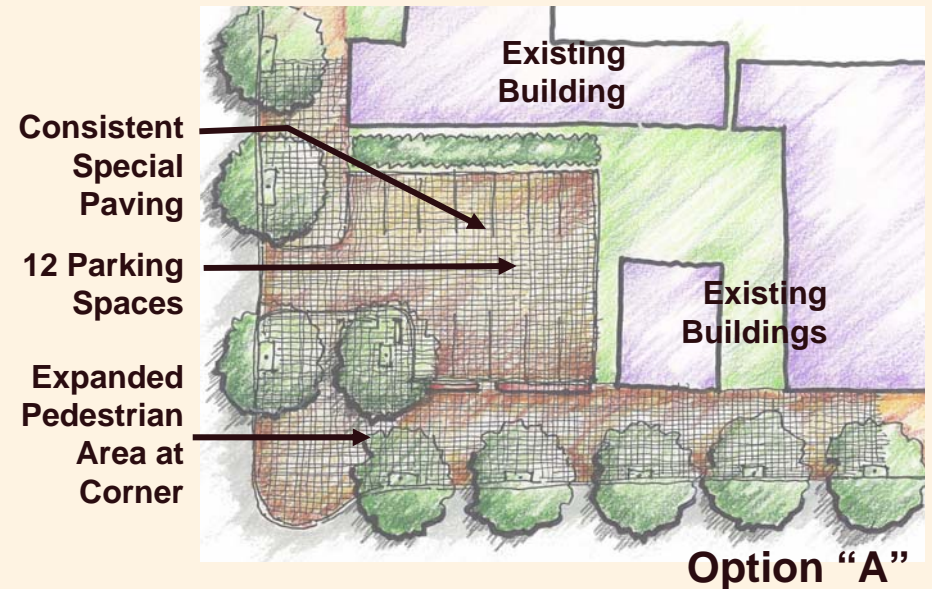
Gateway Icon designed to reflect historic character



## D. Public and Private Improvements

### Town Square

- ▶ **Option “A”:** Redesign existing city parking lot and sidewalks at Mt. Vernon Avenue and Oxford
- ▶ **Option “B”:** Redesign and expand existing city parking lot to the south (acquire parcel to the south)
- ▶ **Design Features**
  - » Create flexible space that can serve daily gathering area, parking needs and special events
  - » Provide seating – benches and low walls
  - » Implement improved paving material
  - » Opportunity for public art





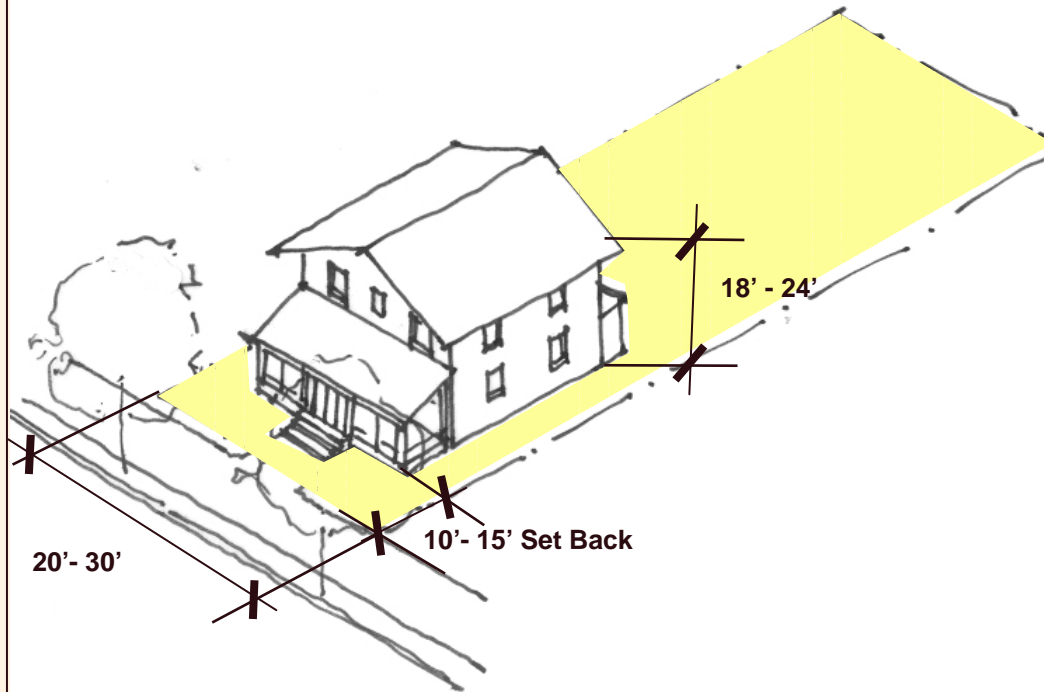
# D. Public and Private Improvements

## Issues & Challenges:

- Many are historic structures that need to be preserved
- Create unique character and variety to Mt. Vernon Avenue streetscape
- Scale issues with surrounding urban fabric
- Set backs compromise definition of the street wall
- Present challenge to develop adjacent sites
- Encourage this type along residential streets
- Discourage this type along Mt. Vernon Ave.

## Building Typology: Single Family Detached

- Commercial Retail - Reuse
- Gabled roof fronts street
- Fenced front yards
- Front porches ~ 8'-10' deep
- Deep roof overhangs
- Vertical windows
- Lot Size: ~ 24'x120'
- Lot Coverage: ~ 30%
- Set Back: ~ 10'- 15'
- Building Height: ~ 18'- 24'





# D. Public and Private Improvements

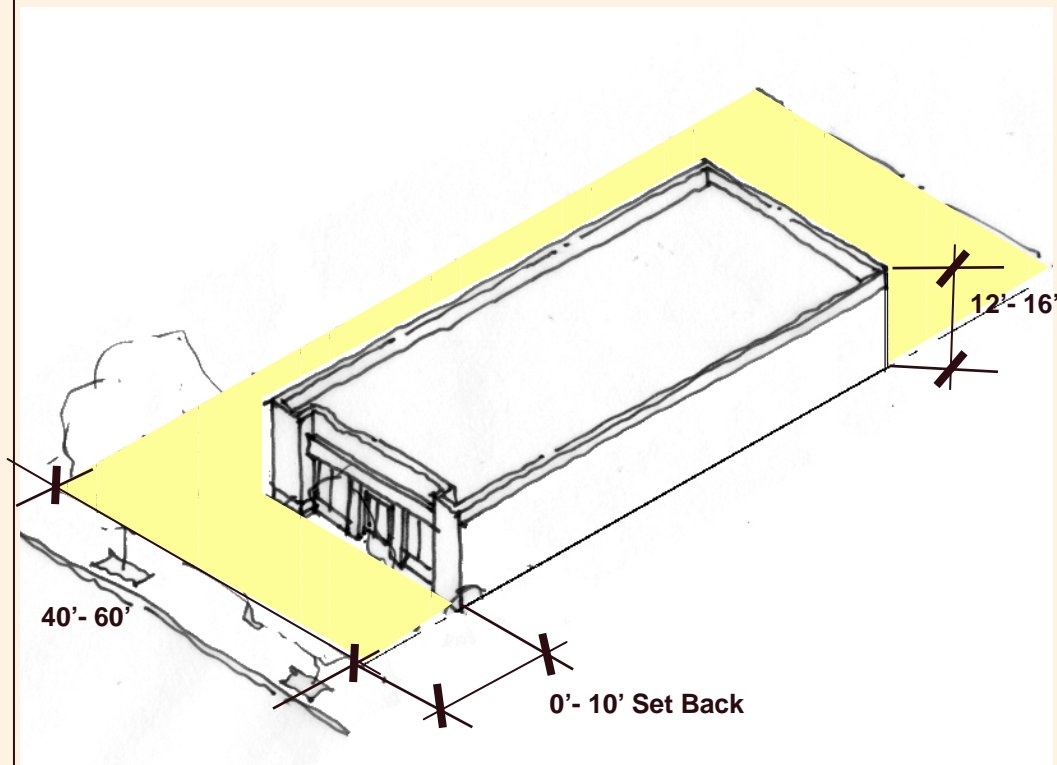
## Issues & Challenges:

- Some are historic structures that need to be preserved
- Scale issue with surrounding urban fabric
- Some set backs and surface parking lots compromise definition of the street wall
- Discourage this type as infill development for Mount Vernon Avenue

## Building Typology: One Story Retail / Commercial

- Retail / Commercial Use
- Flat roofs with parapet
- 60% Glazing / Storefront
- Awnings
- Retail Signage

- Lot Size: ~ 60'x120'
- Lot Coverage: ~ 50% - 60%
- Set Back: ~ 0' - 10'
- Building Height: ~ 12' - 16'



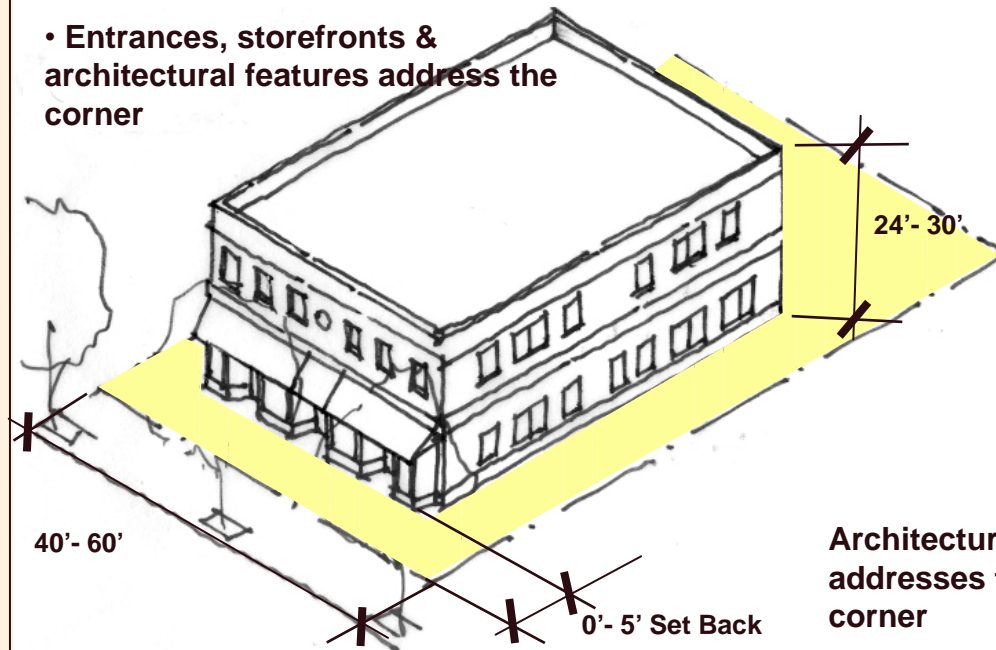
# D. Public and Private Improvements

## Issues & Challenges:

- Some are historic structures that need to be preserved
- Is a flexible building type for renovation/redevelopment as well as new infill development opportunities
- Encourage this type as infill development along Mt. Vernon Ave.

## Building Typology: Two Story Retail / Commercial

- Ground floor retail use
- Flat roofs with parapet
- 75% - 80% glazing/storefront at ground floor
- Vertically proportioned windows at upper floors
- Lot Size: ~ 60'x120'
- Lot Coverage: ~ 60% - 75%
- Set Back: ~ 0' - 5'
- Building Height: ~ 24' - 30'
- Awnings, overhangs & retail signage
- Entrances, storefronts & architectural features address the corner



Architecture addresses the corner



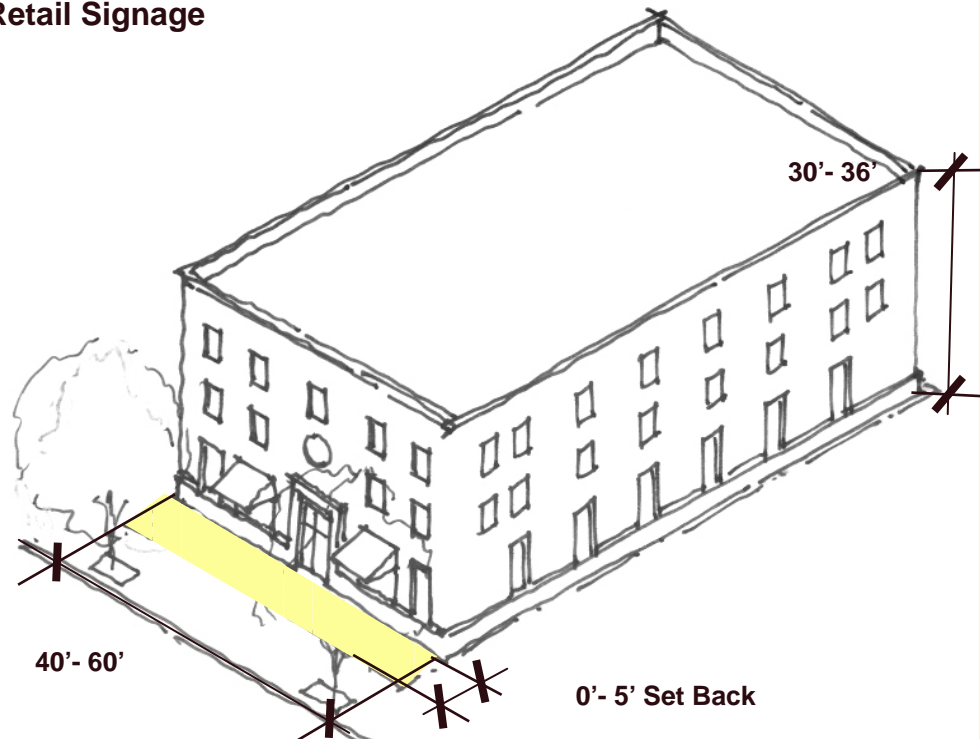
## D. Public and Private Improvements

### Issues & Challenges:

- Some are historic structures that need to be preserved
- Is a flexible building type for renovation/redevelopment as well as new infill development opportunities
- Encourage this type as infill development along Mt. Vernon Ave.

### Building Typology: Three Story Retail / Commercial

- Flat roofs with parapet
- 75% - 80% Glazing/Storefront at ground floor
- Vertically proportioned windows at upper floors
- Awnings and overhangs
- Retail Signage
- Lot Size: ~ 60'x120'
- Lot Coverage: ~ 75% - 80%
- Set Back: ~ 0' - 5'
- Building Height: ~ 30' - 36'



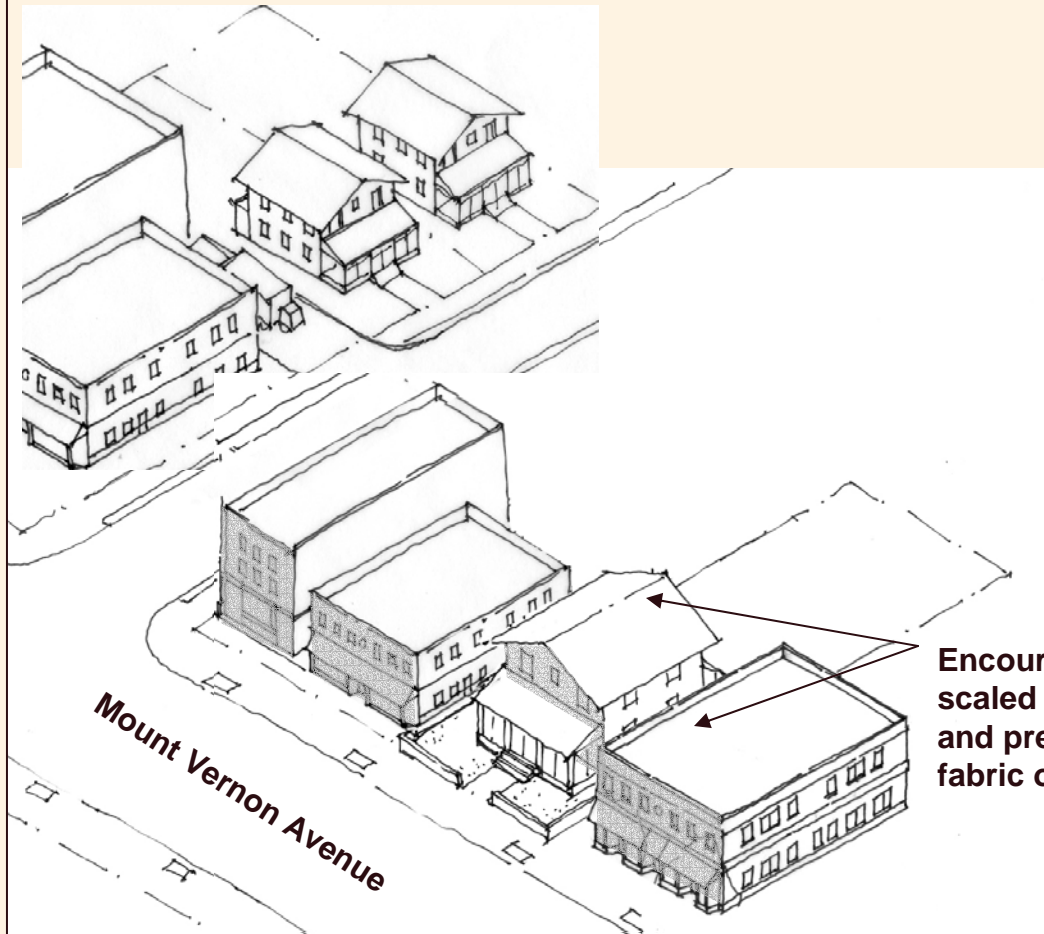


## D. Public and Private Improvements

### Design Principles:

- Preserve historic fabric and variety of building types along Mt Vernon Ave.
- Encourage redevelopment with appropriately scaled infill development that is sensitive to the scale massing and character of existing fabric

### Design Principle: Encourage Similar Scale Typology



Encourage appropriately scaled infill development and preserve historic fabric of Mt Vernon Ave.



# Next Steps

## Next Meeting

- ▶ **Form Based Code**
- ▶ **Finalizing Opportunity Sites (outside the core)**
- ▶ **Zoning**